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THE CHINA OF OUR GRANDMOTHERS.

II.



WRITER upon the artist Whistler, in *The Home Journal*, says of him: "He discovered the transcendent merit of the 'blue and white' over which people now run mad," and "it may

seem surprising that people waited so long for Mr. Whistler to find all this out for them." This is an absurd mistake. Blue has been in all ages the most favored color, and during the past century it was the principal color in the printed ware, used altogether by people of moderate means, who could not afford painted and gilded porcelain. The earliest Egyptian pottery was covered with a beautiful blue glaze, the incised decorations being of a deeper blue. The celebrated Portland vase is of blue glass, with opaque white figures cut in cameo, a layer of white being laid upon the blue for that purpose.

The earliest blue wares of Europe were the "gres," or blue stoneware bottles of Holland, called "graybeards," from a bearded face which was generally placed under the lip of the pitcher, and sometimes at the base of the handle. This ware was imitated at Fulham, in England, by Dr. Dwight. Then the Canton porcelain was imported largely from China, together with the old-time blue ginger-jars, of which latter an English nobleman has made a recent collection. This Canton china was generally decorated with the famous old willow pattern. Some pieces of it are in the collection of "Washington's table ware," in the Patent Office, and the writer obtained a portion of a platter of the same which had been dug up in the gardens at Mount Vernon. The celebrated Van Ness family, of Washington, had much of this ware, which has been scattered in many directions, the writer being the fortunate possessor of an elegant soup-tureen and platter once belonging to that family. The handles are boars' heads, quaint as Chinese faces. Horace Walpole's famous "tub" in which the "favorite cat" met her death must also have been of Canton porcelain. It was certainly blue. "The azure flowers that blow," wrote Cowper. And Walpole told Lord Leicester, when twitted by that nobleman with abandoning his old hobby of buying china, "I used to love blue trees, now I love green ones." He had finished his "Castle" and was fascinated with planting trees. All these instances serve to show that blue china and the love of it flourished long before Mr. Whistler visited this mundane sphere, and that neither in Europe, Asia, nor America was there need that any one should find this wonderful thing out for us. One of the pleasures of my early childhood was to have play-houses with mimic shelves and bits of broken china which I called my dishes; and a great pleasure departed from baby-land when white ware became fashionable. In "Helen's Babies" how natural it is that Toddie should turn up his plate to see the "turkles" on the bottom, as there were no pictures on the upper side!

The first illustration (Fig. 6) shows the oldest and most beautiful blue plate in my cabinet. It came from a member of the Clayton family in Virginia, and was brought from England in 1771. The lady, whose family has dwelt upon the same beautiful farm for nearly a century, let me have the plate quite willingly, as she had several other pieces, and but one daughter to inherit them, who seemed quite careless about the matter.

The plate is of pottery, of the largest dinner size, and the decoration is of the darkest, richest blue. A superb old abbey, with trees, lawn, and a group of human figures, make the central picture. The border is exceed-

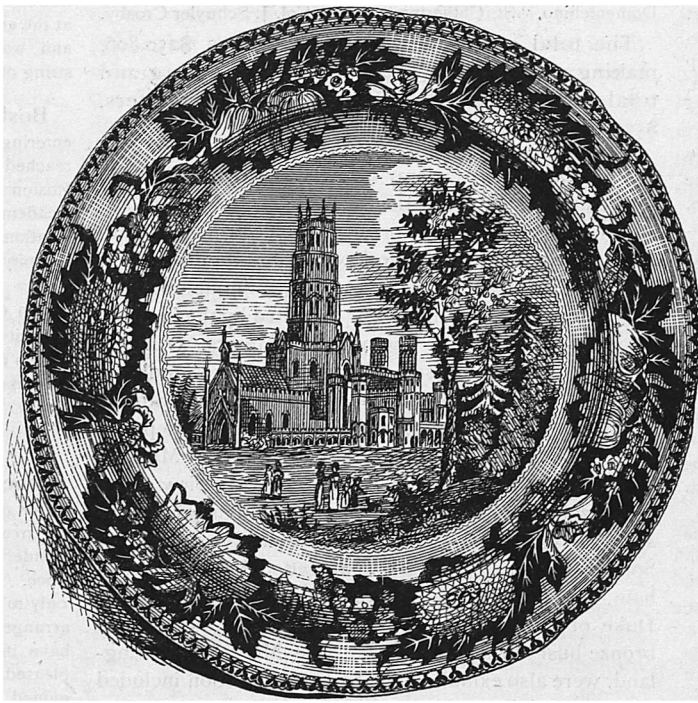


FIG. 6.—ENGLISH PLATE.

MARKS: "WARRANTED STAFFORDSHIRE, CLEWS," IN CIRCLE SURROUNDING A CROWN (IMPRESSED), AND "FONTHILL ABBEY, WILTSHIRE," IN BLUE OVAL.

ingly beautiful, being composed of large flowers tastefully arranged. The marks are, "Warranted Staffordshire, Clews," in circle surrounding a crown, impressed; and in an ornamented oval in blue print are the words "Fonthill Abbey, Wiltshire."

The piece shown in Fig. 7 is, I think, of French faïence. The mark is "Adams," impressed; and "Boulogne" in ornamental blue scroll. The decoration is in light blue, the groundwork of the border being made of

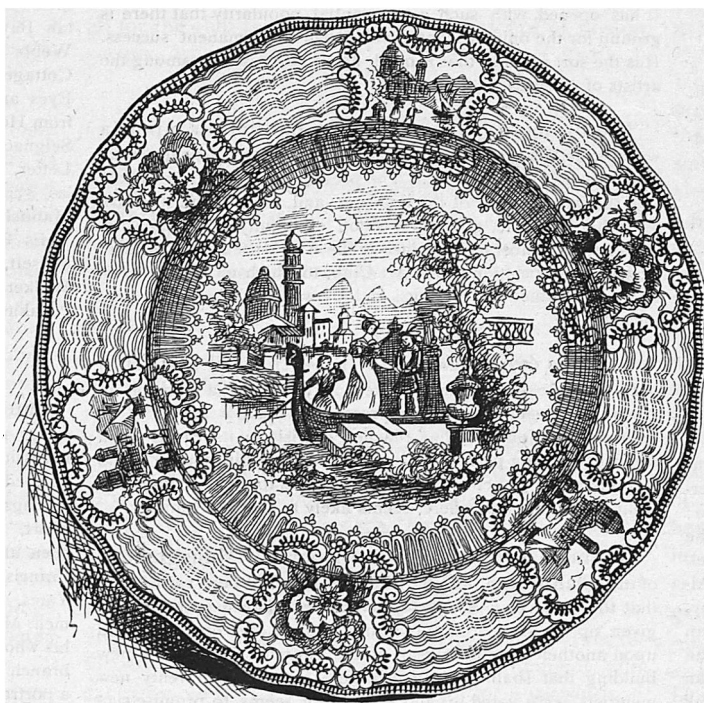


FIG. 7.—FRENCH FAÏENCE PLATE.

MARKS: "ADAMS" (IMPRESSED) AND "BOULOGNE" IN BLUE SCROLL.

fine waving lines, and the ornaments medallions, with landscapes and flowers alternating. The central picture gives a Venetian landscape with figures in medi-

æval costumes in the foreground. In a London book of marks and monograms "Adams" is placed at Tunstall in 1780, and Mr. Prime tells us that Adams, an English potter, obtained leave of the French crown and started a pottery factory near Paris, which he afterward moved near to Boulogne. He also gives the date of 1780, and there is no doubt that it is the same Adams. The plate is therefore just a century old. It is a souvenir from my gentle hostess of many lovely summers in the mountains, and is one of the old pieces which belonged to her ancestral home in Virginia.

Figure 8 shows a magnificent old dish, altogether unique in form and massive in size. It is decorated with the willow pattern, and is marked "Clews," impressed. It is a cheese-dish, formed like a crescent, and set on a large heavy base or stand. The cheese being cut in halves, one part was set edgewise into the dish, and it was cut while at table. To one acquainted with life on a Southern farm or large plantation in antebellum days, such a dish suggests a spacious dining-room with the table surrounded by a large family, and with always a number of friends and relations as visitors; colored waiters ready at hand to answer the slightest call, and Dinah at a side-table to pour coffee, milk, and wine; large platters at either end of the table holding roast mutton and a turkey, or roast pork and chickens, with all manner of side-dishes flanking the middle of the table, and each piece of ware matching the one here illustrated. This elegant old dish came from Virginia, and is now in possession of Dr. Toner, of Washington. It is fifteen inches in length, eight in height, and five and a half in width, and is decorated inside, as well as outside, in a bright blue.

Figure 9 represents an India plaque, fifteen inches wide, of hard porcelain, similar to that of Canton, and with quaint Oriental floral designs in blue. The peculiar decorations on each side are in relief, and are much more brilliantly glazed than the body of the plaque.

A small opening has been left for the insertion of ribbon or cord for hanging. The mark is "Madras," in ornamental blue scroll. This piece came from an old Georgetown family, and is a beautiful example of old-time porcelain. The lettering being in English, it was probably marked to order for the East India Company.

Figure 10 shows an exquisite little creamer of the finest, thinnest porcelain, with blue and gold decorations. It is unmarked, but no doubt belongs to the class of china described by several writers as brought over to England by the East India Company. The blue is a brilliant enamel with the gold laid over it, and the centre of the flower appears to be of crystal, the gold lines reflecting themselves within it. It is precisely like the sacred crystals which accompany many dragon decorations, and which, according to Japanese law, the dragon is forever striving to obtain from man. This pitcher was obtained from a descendant of the Arbuckles, of Virginia, and the date is about 1760. I have a Pennington pitcher of this date which is of a nearly similar form.

MARY E. NEALY.

AT the earlier factories in Europe the secrets of the manufacture of porcelain were jealously guarded, the workmen being solemnly sworn not to divulge them; but self-interest triumphed, doubtless for the public benefit, and potteries were established in many places. By no means the least entertaining parts of the history

are accounts of the rivalry of contending factories. Berlin, for example, could not bear the thought that it should to all time be surpassed by Dresden even in this manufacture; and a porcelain manufactory was therefore established in Berlin, as a department of the public service. Failing in the direct support that was expected, it was subsidized by the wary Frederick the Great in a most effective and significant manner. An act was passed compelling every Jew in the Prussian dominions, on his marriage, to purchase 300 thalers' worth of porcelain; or rather, he was required to accept whatever was sent to him, and to pay the money meekly into the treasury. It was a new and ingenious way of raising a tax, and of imposing a new disability on a much-persecuted people, who, luckily, could flourish in spite of all such disabilities. But it is with some sense of the humorous irony of the situation we read that to the lot of the good and great Moses Mendelssohn, the modern Jewish reformer, who was very slight of stature and much deformed in the back, fell a great number of monkeys, which, as we are seriously told by the last biographer of the family, have been carefully preserved as heirlooms. Many articles of porcelain carry with them a family history—but few surely such a grim record as the monkeys of Moses Mendelssohn—that "have been carefully preserved as heirlooms."

THE INVENTOR OF HARD PORCELAIN.

THE life of John Frederick Böttgcher, the inventor of hard porcelain, presents many points of singular and almost romantic interest. Böttgcher was born at Schleiz, in the Voightland, in 1685, and at twelve years of age was placed apprentice with an apothecary at Berlin. He seems to have been early fascinated by chemistry, and occupied most of his leisure in making experiments. These for the most part tended in one direction—the art of converting common metals into gold. At the end of several years Böttgcher pretended to have discovered the universal solvent of the alchemists, and professed that he had made gold by its means. He exhibited its powers before his master, the apothecary Zörn, and by some trick or other succeeded in making him and several other witnesses believe that he had actually converted copper into gold.

The news spread abroad that the apothecary's apprentice had discovered the grand secret, and crowds collected about the shop to get a sight of the wonderful young "gold-cook." The king himself expressed a wish to see and converse with him, and when Frederick I. was presented with a piece of the gold pretended to have been converted from copper, he was so dazzled with the prospect of securing an infinite quantity of it—Prussia being then in great straits for money—that he determined to secure Böttgcher and employ him to make gold for him within the strong fortress of Spandau. But the young apothecary, suspecting the king's intention, and probably fearing detection, at once resolved on flight, and he succeeded in getting across the frontier into Saxony.

A reward of a thousand thalers was offered for Böttgcher's apprehension, but in vain. He arrived at Wittenberg, and appealed for protection to the Elector of Saxony, Frederick Augustus I. (King of Poland), surnamed "the Strong." Frederick was himself very much in want of money at the time, and he was overjoyed at the prospect of obtaining gold in any quantity by the aid of the young alchemist. Böttgcher was accordingly conveyed in secret to Dresden, accompanied by a royal escort. He had scarcely left Wittenberg when a battalion of Prussian grenadiers appeared before the gates demanding the gold-maker's extradition. But it was too late: Böttgcher had already arrived in Dresden, where he was lodged in the Golden House, and treated with every consideration, though strictly watched and kept under guard.

The Elector, however, must needs leave him there for a time, having to depart forthwith to Poland, then almost in a state of anarchy. But, impatient for gold, he wrote Böttgcher from Warsaw, urging him to communicate the secret, so that he himself might practise

of heart;" and as his Majesty was conscious of having spent the evening in very bad company, he attributed the failure of the experiment to that cause. A second trial was followed by no better results; and then the King became furious, for he had confessed and received absolution before beginning the second experiment.

Frederick Augustus now resolved on forcing Böttgcher to disclose the golden secret, as the only means of relief from his urgent pecuniary difficulties. The alchemist, hearing of the royal intention, again determined to fly. He succeeded in escaping his guard, and, after three days' travel, arrived at Ens, in Austria, where he thought himself safe. The agents of the Elector were, however, at his heels; they had tracked him to the "Golden Stag," which they surrounded, and seizing him in his bed, notwithstanding his resistance and appeals to the Austrian authorities for help, they carried him by force to Dresden. From this time he was more strictly watched than ever, and he was shortly after transferred to the strong fortress of Königstein. It was communicated to him that the royal exchequer was completely empty, and that ten regiments of Poles in arrears of pay were waiting for his gold. The King himself visited him, and told him in a severe tone that if he did not at once proceed to make gold he would be hung! ("Thu mir zurecht, Böttgcher, sonst lass ich dich hängen.")

Years passed, and still Böttgcher made no gold; but he was not hung. It was reserved for him to make a far more important discovery than the conversion of copper into gold—namely, the conversion of clay into porcelain. Some rare specimens of this ware had been brought by the Portuguese from China, which were sold for more than their weight in gold. Böttgcher was first induced to turn his attention to the subject by Walter von Tschirnhaus, a maker of optical instruments, also an alchemist. Tschirnhaus was a man of education and distinction, and was held in much esteem by Prince Fürstenburg as well as by the Elector. He very sensibly said to Böttgcher, still in fear of the gallows, "If you can't make gold, try and do something else; make porcelain."

The alchemist acted on the hint, and began his experiments, working night and day. He prosecuted his investigations for a long time with great assiduity, but without success. At length some red clay, brought to him for the purpose of making his crucibles, set him on the right track. He found that this clay, when submitted to a high temperature, became vitrified and retained its shape, and that its texture re-

sembled that of porcelain, excepting in color and opacity.

He had, in fact, accidentally discovered red porcelain, and he proceeded to manufacture it and sell it as porcelain.

Böttgcher was, however, well aware that the white color was an essential property of true porcelain, and he therefore prosecuted his experiments in the hope of discovering the secret. Several years thus passed, but without success, until again accident stood his friend, and helped him to a knowledge of the art of making white porcelain. One day, in the year 1707, he found his peruke unusually heavy, and asked of his valet the reason. The answer was that it was owing to the powder with which the wig was dressed, which consisted of a kind of earth then much used for hair-powder.

Böttgcher's quick imagination immediately seized upon the idea. This white earthy powder might possibly be the very earth of which he was in search—at all events the opportunity must not be let slip of ascertaining what it really was. He was rewarded for his painstaking care and watchfulness; for he found, on experiment, that the principal ingredient of the hair-powder consisted of kaolin, the want of which had so long formed an insuperable difficulty in the way of his inquiries.

(To be concluded.)

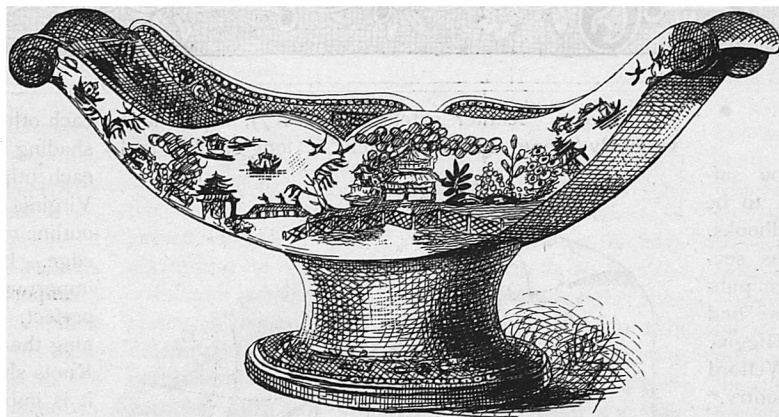


FIG. 8.—DR. TONER'S CHEESE-DISH.

MARK: "CLEWS" (IMPRESSED).

the art of commutation. The young "gold-cook," thus pressed, forwarded to Frederick a small vial containing "a reddish fluid," which, it was asserted, changed all metals, when in a molten state, into gold. This important vial was taken in charge by the Prince Fürst von Fürstenburg, who, accompanied by a regiment of

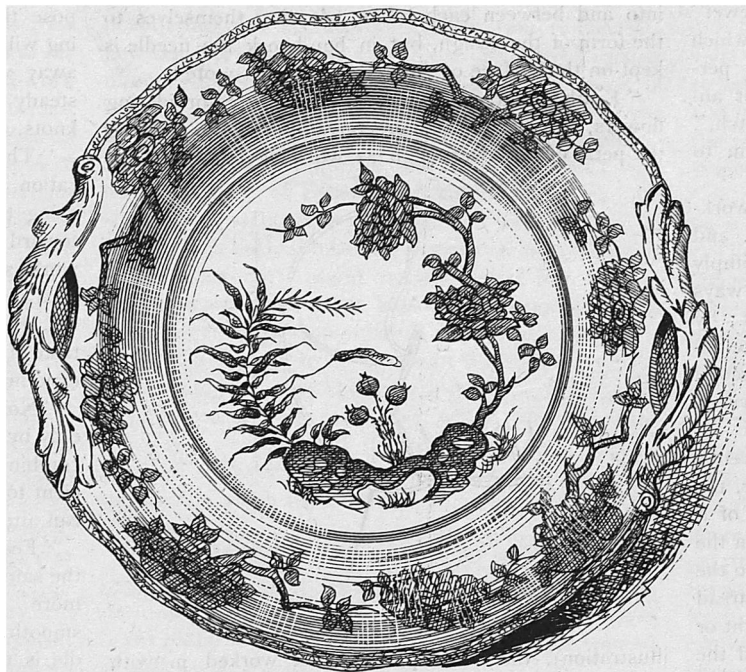


FIG. 9.—INDIA PORCELAIN PLAQUE.

MARK: "MADRAS" IN BLUE SCROLL.

Guards, hurried with it to Warsaw. Arrived there, it was determined to make immediate trial of the process. The King and the Prince locked themselves up in a secret chamber of the palace, girt themselves about with leather aprons, and, like true "gold-cooks," set to work melting copper in a crucible and afterward ap-

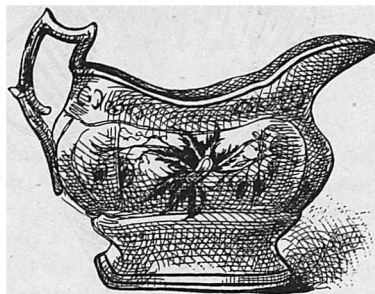


FIG. 10.—CREAMER.

NO MARK. FINEST PORCELAIN.

plying to it the red fluid of Böttgcher. But the result was unsatisfactory; for, notwithstanding all that they could do, the copper obstinately remained copper. On referring to the alchemist's instructions, however, the King found that, to succeed with the process, it was necessary that the fluid should be used "in great purity